



NRC NEWS

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NRC BEGINS SPECIAL INSPECTION AT PALISADES NUCLEAR PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has initiated a special inspection at the Palisades Nuclear Power Station where several plant workers received unintended radiation exposures early Wednesday when a storage container holding irradiated equipment briefly rose to the surface of the water-filled refueling area at the plant.

The plant, operated by Nuclear Management Co. at Covert, Mich., is shut down for refueling.

About six workers were manipulating a two-part storage container underwater in the refueling area when an inner portion of the container, apparently buoyed by air inside, rose briefly to the surface. The workers were exposed to the radiation emitted from the highly radioactive equipment inside the container.

According to radiation detectors, worn by the workers, the maximum radiation exposure was less than 50 millirems which is a small portion of the 5,000 millirem annual federal limit for radiation workers. No adverse health effects would be expected from such radiation exposures, and no medical treatment was necessary.

The NRC inspectors will review the circumstances surrounding the incident, including why air remained trapped inside the container and what actions the workers were performing at the time of the incident. The inspectors will also make an independent assessment of the radiation exposures received by the workers.

The workers were preparing to open the shielded container under water when the incident occurred. The container held neutron detectors which were previously installed in the reactor. The neutron detectors in the reactor core are periodically replaced and stored prior to being sent offsite to a radioactive waste disposal site.

The special inspection team will issue its report about 30 days after the completion of the inspection. The report will be available from the Region III Office of Public Affairs or in the agency's online document library at: <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams/web-based.html>.

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